

BITTERNESS BUBBLING OVER

READ: EPHESIANS 4:26-32

Jake stomped into the kitchen. Slamming his backpack on the ground, he grumbled, “I have the worst science teacher ever!”

Mom dried her hands on a towel and turned to face him. “Calm down, Jake. What’s wrong with your science teacher? When I met Mr. Harnetty at the parent-teacher conference, he seemed very nice. But he mentioned you often have a bad attitude in class.”

“Mr. Harnetty is too hard! He assigned a project over the weekend. It’s so unfair!” Jake pulled out a crumpled piece of paper from his backpack and shoved it toward Mom. “He said we’re supposed to make a volcano and write a lab report on it.”

Mom studied the instructions. “I think we have just enough time to make it before dinner.”

With a disgusted sigh, Jake got started. Skimming the instructions, he put air-dry clay around a water bottle to cement it in place. Then he added baking soda and red food dye to the water bottle.

“What’s the last step?” Mom asked.

“Adding a cup of vinegar.” While filling the cup, Jake muttered, “This is so lame.” He dumped the vinegar into the bottle and leaned back to watch the volcano. Without warning, the volcano erupted in a burst of red, coating Jake with slime.

Mom gasped. “What happened?”

Jake wiped goo from his eyes and looked at the instructions again. “Ugh! I forgot to punch holes in the water bottle!”

“Hmm,” Mom said as she sat down at the table. “You know, I think your attitude about Mr. Harnetty has been a lot like this volcano.”

“What do you mean?” Jake narrowed his eyes.

“You seem to be storing bitterness in your heart—bitterness that explodes and leaves a nasty mess everywhere. But Jesus fills our hearts with something different—He makes our hearts overflow with kindness and forgiveness, not bitterness.”

Jake studied the ground. “I guess I was bitter at Mr. Harnetty because he gives us so much work, but I should be kinder and more forgiving—especially since he’s just trying to help us learn.” He looked back up at Mom. “I’m going to email Mr. Harnetty an apology for having a bad attitude. Then I’m going to write a lab report about the best science project ever!” ♥ OLIVIA SUMMERS

LET GO OF BITTERNESS

KEY VERSE: WATCH OUT THAT THAT NO POISONOUS ROOT OF BITTERNESS GROWS UP TO TROUBLE YOU, CORRUPTING MANY. HEBREWS 12:15 (NLT)

Are you quick to hold a grudge and slow to forgive? Do you store up bitterness against others and let it smolder until it bursts out? The Bible tells us to forgive others the way Jesus forgives us. Instead of being bitter when you feel like you’ve been treated unfairly, give your burdens to Jesus. Then trust Him to fill your heart with His love.

NO STAINS

READ: COLOSSIANS 1:12-14; 1 PETER 1:18-21

New and improved,” read Evie’s mom as she picked up a bottle of spot remover at the store. She grinned at Evie. “I saw this advertised on TV the other day. It’s supposed to work wonders. According to the satisfied customer in the commercial, it removes the most difficult stains.”

“Oh, could we try it on my blue shirt? Please?” asked Evie. “It’s got that spot that won’t come out. I try to hide it with my arm, but I can’t always keep my arm in the right place to cover the spot. Maybe this stuff would take it out.”

“Well, it’s not cheap,” said Mom. “But okay, I guess we can try it. Don’t get your hopes up too much, though. Just because you hear something on TV doesn’t mean it’s true.”

They took the spot remover home, and after carefully following the directions on the bottle, Evie washed the shirt. She was disappointed with the results. “I guess the money spent on that expensive stuff was wasted.” She shook her head. “I can’t believe it! They can launch rockets into space, but they can’t find a way to get this little spot out of my shirt.”

Mom laughed. “Nope. Their best efforts have failed.” She looked thoughtfully at the shirt. “You know, there’s another area where everyone’s best efforts fail.”

“Where’s that, Mom?” asked Evie.

“Everybody is born a sinner and does things that are wrong—it’s as though the stain of sin is on each person’s life,” Mom explained. “People often try to hide it by being good. Sometimes they manage to keep other people from seeing it, but it’s still there! There’s nothing a person can do to remove the stain of sin.”

“Nope,” said Evie, “but I know you’re going to point out there is something that can wash sin away. It’s the blood of Jesus.”

“You’re right,” said Mom. “God offers salvation freely to all who admit their need for Jesus and trust Him as their Savior. He alone can wash away our sin and make us clean.”

Evie nodded. “And we don’t have to pay a thing for our salvation. Jesus paid it all when He died on the cross to take the punishment we deserve.” ♥

HAZEL W. MARETT

JESUS’S BLOOD WASHES AWAY SIN

KEY VERSE: JESUS CHRIST...LOVED US AND WASHED US FROM OUR SINS IN HIS OWN BLOOD. REVELATION 1:5

Did you know you were born a sinner? Every person sins against God by doing things that are wrong. Do you try to cover up your sin or get rid of it through your own efforts? You’ll never be able to do that. Sin can only be washed away by the blood of Jesus. If you’ve been trying to hide your sin with good behavior, admit your failure today. Trust in Jesus, and He will make you clean.

THE LIGHTHOUSE

READ: MATTHEW 5:14-16; JOHN 8:12

Up...up...up...Aiden and his classmates were getting tired as they followed the lighthouse caretaker. Way up in the top room, the caretaker pointed to the powerful lamp. “This runs on electricity,” she said, indicating the heavy cables that went into the lamp. “Its light can be seen for many miles.” Walking over to a counter, she pointed to an old lamp on display there. “This is the one that was used before they had electricity here. It ran on kerosene. Back in those days, the caretaker’s most important job was to make sure the lamp didn’t run out of fuel.”

“But that lamp is so much smaller than the one used now,” observed one of the kids. “It couldn’t shine very far over the ocean, could it?”

“Actually, it could.” The caretaker picked up two odd-shaped pieces of glass from the counter. “These are prisms. They’re cut in a special way to bend the rays of light that hit them and reflect them back—not once, but several times. By using prisms, the beam of light from the lamp can be magnified up to a thousand times. Even with the smaller lamp, a sailor far out at sea could see the beam of reflected light.”

That night, Aiden told his dad some of the things he learned on the visit to the lighthouse. “Years ago they used a much smaller lamp than the electric one they have now,” he said. “They used prisms to reflect the beam of light, and it could be seen by sailors miles out at sea.”

“That’s interesting,” said Dad. “And do you know what that reminds me of?”

Aiden chuckled. “Probably something to do with the Bible. Maybe that Jesus is called the light of the world?”

Dad grinned at him. “That too, but I was actually thinking of the prisms. If Jesus is the light of the world, who are those prisms?”

“Umm...I know. Christians!” Aiden said. “We shine with Jesus’s light.”

“Right,” said Dad. “When we treat others with the kindness and love Jesus has shown us, we reflect His light for the rest of the world to see. Each of those prisms was important, and each one of us is too.”

“Yep.” Aiden grinned. “It’s our job to reflect God’s light to everyone.” ♥

LINDA WEDDLE



LET YOUR LIFE REFLECT JESUS

KEY VERSE: YOU SHINE AS LIGHTS IN THE WORLD. PHILIPPIANS 2:15

Do you know Jesus as your Savior? If so, you have His light shining within you. How can you reflect that light to those around you? Are you telling others about Him? Are you using the talents He gave you to glorify Him? Are you treating others in a kind and loving way? Trust Him to help you shine out so others can see the light of His love.

RASCAL'S SONG

READ: PSALM 68:3-4, 32-35

What pet should I get? Eli wondered. His parents had agreed that he could have either a bird or a guinea pig if he would care for it properly. He thought about getting a bird. It would be cool to have a pet that sings, but he could hold a guinea pig and play with it. It was a hard decision, but Eli finally decided on a guinea pig and named it Rascal.

Each day, Eli checked Rascal's food and water and spent time petting him. "I'm glad I got Rascal! He's fun to play with," Eli told his parents. "Now if he could just learn to sing, we'd be all set."

One morning, Eli rushed into the kitchen. "Mom! Come to my room! There's something you've got to see!" Mom hurried with Eli to his room. "Listen!" said Eli as Rascal began to make whistling sounds. "He's singing! I thought about getting a bird because it would sing, and now Rascal is singing! Do you think all guinea pigs sing like that?"

"I read online that they often make squealing and whistling sounds when they're happy," said Mom.

"I guess Rascal must be happy then!" Eli said.

Mom nodded. "He sounds happy to me, and I noticed he began whistling when you stepped into the room. He seems to recognize you. Perhaps he's singing to express affection in his own way and to thank you for taking such good care of him."

Eli grinned at that thought. "That would be cool."

"Doesn't it make you feel good to know you're taking care of all his needs?" asked Mom. "And that he's happy and content and showing his gratitude?" Eli nodded. "You know," Mom continued, "God is pleased when we sing praises to Him. Many of the psalms David wrote are songs of praise. They're in the Bible to remind us to praise and thank God for all He's done for us. Through Jesus, He's rescued us from sin and given us eternal life, and He provides us with everything we need. That's a lot to be thankful for!"

Eli smiled and nodded. "I guess we should be like Rascal and sing praises to thank God for the way He cares for us." ♥RONDA L. SHERRILL

SING PRAISES TO GOD

KEY VERSE: EACH MORNING I WILL SING WITH JOY ABOUT
YOUR UNFAILING LOVE. PSALM 59:16 (NLT)

Do you appreciate all the care God gives you? Do you thank Him for the many blessings He has provided—food, clothes, toys, family, friends, protection? Do you thank Him for forgiveness, new life in Jesus, and a future in heaven with Him? Try doing what our Key Verse suggests—sing a joyful song to God! He loves you and likes to hear you sing His praises.

THE DEMONSTRATION

READ: PHILIPPIANS 1:9-11

Guess what?" Grace bounded into the kitchen, followed by her friend Ava. "Ava and I volunteered to give a demonstration at the next youth club meeting."

"That's great," said Mom. "What will you demonstrate?"

Both girls looked at her with a blank stare, and then burst into peals of laughter. "We didn't even think about that," said Ava. "It just sounded like fun to get up and give a demonstration!" All was quiet for a moment. Then Ava snapped her fingers. "I know. Let's give a demonstration on flower arranging. My mom has a book that shows how to do it. I'm sure she'll let us use it."

"Good idea," said Grace, so the girls went to Ava's house and spent the afternoon studying pictures and instructions and practicing arranging flowers.

Finally, they returned to Grace's house to show her mom a bouquet they had made. "This is the kind of arrangement we plan to demonstrate," said Ava.

"Beautiful!" Mom exclaimed. "That's really lovely."

"We have three weeks to practice and get our speech ready," said Grace. She held up the bouquet. "We want to give this to Ava's aunt. She just had surgery and can't even get out of bed. Can I go visit her with Ava tomorrow morning?"

"Sure," said Mom, and the next morning the girls took the flowers to the hospital and spent an hour talking with Ava's aunt.

"How did your demonstration go?" Mom asked when Grace returned home.

"We won't be doing that for a few weeks yet," Grace said, surprised her mother had forgotten. "Today we just took the flowers to Ava's aunt."

Mom smiled. "I know you did, and that's the demonstration I'm talking about. You girls demonstrated something far more important than flower arranging."

"We did?" said Grace.

"A lot of people talk about God's love, but you and Ava demonstrated it by your thoughtfulness," Mom explained, giving Grace a hug. "The flowers you arranged are beautiful, but not nearly as beautiful as the love you showed by giving them to Ava's aunt and spending time with her. Your actions demonstrate that Jesus is working in your life to help you love and care for others the way He does."

Grace's face slowly broke into a huge smile. ♥ BARBARA J. WESTBERG

DEMONSTRATE GOD'S LOVE

KEY VERSE: DEAR CHILDREN, LET'S NOT MERELY SAY THAT WE LOVE EACH OTHER; LET US SHOW THE TRUTH BY OUR ACTIONS. 1 JOHN 3:18 (NLT)

Do your actions show God's love to others? Are you friendly and kind to other kids? Do you help out whenever you can? Do you put others ahead of your own plans and wishes? We need to tell others about Jesus and His love for us, but we also need to show it through our actions. So let others see Jesus in you. Demonstrate God's love to someone today.